

regret is that I can't answer your letters in person, but I'll call some night when I think a few of you are at the Hansgirgs."

(Cutshaw adds numerous marginal notes in which he makes apology for "this silly stuff" which, he says, "could have been more philosophic. ed.)

...--Henry Adams

PLOT IS...--by Alice Jackson

Plot is as fictitious as the existence of straight lines, because the garbage can, the squares on the pavement, the broken gate are the story, not the net which incorporates them and weaves them in as supporting local color. Oh no! It was the solid, material garbage can that parented our aesthetic wanderings into the immaterial.

It was noisily leaning on one elbow in a slimy, stinking corner, quite disinterested in the passing feet and more indifferent to the ones which stopped. Dusty orange juice dribbled down one corner, regardless of the fact that it was circular, and it was not improbable that a hoard of the White Bugs were already busily engaged in gnawing at its guts. Eventually, some of the feet would stop, lift it high in the air, drop its insides, and set it down again with the customary ruthlessness. This was an entirely proper procedure, the object being a garbage can and destined to be treated as such.

Some of the passing feet, those with an analytical mind attached, might pause to survey the object with a feeling of disgust, determining as they moved on that it must go out of vogue, and with it the unpleasant stink. Other pairs regarded it as a "part of life", quite natural, and notoriously lacking food for thought. However, the third, normal, and majority feet, wandering vaguely to or fro someplace quite important, only saw the can briefly, unconsciously as part of the chain.

...ridiculously full buckets of tears drop from the sky, ridiculously full, but why does that stick in my mind, where does it belong, how does it fit in, fit in, yes--that's it, everything must fit in somehow together, make a pattern. Even if it doesn't fit in, it makes a pattern. Patterns are just groups of anything...but what about isolated objects? Probably they don't exist, yet there is no more a logical reason for articles necessarily being part of something than there is for them to be no part of something. "Life is a journey and not a goal"? To be lived for its intrinsic worth and not its ultimate purpose, which can be nothing but what it is as it is lived? Is it then individual isolation in a pattern, a net apart from the net? Good Christ! This constant circling about, everything is a cycle, a sphere, an ellipse, a circle, the column of the post-office, the curve of the sky, the squares on the pavement, the top of the garbage can, the filthy, stinking garbage can, almost like bayberries at night--not almost, but quite--"quite"--strange word, signifies degree. Degree is relative, too--to more degree, another circle? And the bayberries, riding at night on the up and down, on the heavy black water, cutting their throats, the throats of the waves that lap--and climb--and peer earnestly into the darkness. Lost souls too, lost by the pen, the typewriter, standardized and turned by one for the others, stamping the foot of environment up and down, a hundred times, branding it in and pushing it down hard so they cannot see without squinting through the brand. And the ash can, the garbage can, the skeleton can see, cannot be changed, cannot respond, cannot be dead nor alive. Safety and security, they have it too...alone.

Why is the heart so hard to find? Why is the mind so deep to fathom? Why do they play in the streets today? Why do they cry on their beds in the night? Why is life life and never death? And it's curved like a barrel for the falls, why wasn't that thought of before? Are the squares of cement really like prison walls, and is it definitely impossible to be inside the trunk of a palm tree, to grow upward with it, to pretend the leaves are only laced fingers, to burst out fast to the sky, couldn't one be a garbage can for just one day? Must we live all to know all? By any chance, are you going around the block?